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DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME MATTERS ON ITS IN-SESSIONAL MEETING HELD DURING THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, 10-14 FEBRUARY 1992

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Ryszard RYSINSKI (Poland)

CHAPTER III. PROGRAMME PLANNING: COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS (continued)

Global and interregional programmes

1. The global and interregional programmes have indicative planning figures (IPFs) of $179 million ($112 million global IPF and $67 million interregional IPF). In addition, there is a $3 million carry-over from the fourth cycle and $35 million in cost-sharing, for a total of $217 million. The programmes have the following areas of concentration: (a) social development and poverty eradication; (b) environment and natural resources; and (c) public sector management.

2. During the discussions, comments were made by nine delegations and concentrated on (a) linkages between upstream research supported by the global programme and its application and dissemination in developing countries; (b) the distinction between global and interregional programmes on the one hand and Special Programme Resources (SPR) on the other; and (c) the need for further refinements on the strategy of the UNDP global and interregional programmes. These refinements will be provided to the Governing Council at its thirty-ninth session.

3. The changes in global and interregional programmes in comparison with earlier submissions to the Governing Council were highlighted as well as the comparative advantage of these programmes, particularly their catalytic role in creating partnerships among donor and recipients to respond in a coordinated manner to developing country needs. It was also emphasized that fifth cycle global and interregional programmes were more focused than in the past.

Comments on the country programme process

4. A number of delegations expressed their views on the process of preparing, focusing and monitoring country programmes. They were supportive of the efforts made to date and noted considerable improvements in the country programmes presented. They recognized that over the past few years, UNDP and Governments had taken the first steps towards transforming UNDP country programming from simply preparing a document for Governing Council approval once every five years, to a continuing programming process involving an ongoing dialogue between UNDP and the recipient Government on the one hand, and between UNDP and its partners within the United Nations system, on the other.

5. It was considered that still much remains to be done: first to concentrate UNDP cooperation in those areas where UNDP has a comparative advantage, and second to ensure that country programmes evolve from the current grouping of activities under thematic headings to coherent strategies for assisting Governments to achieve national development objectives.

6. Genuine concern was also expressed on the part of some member countries that the shift from projects to thematic groupings of activities had resulted in a loss of information to the Governing Council. It was felt that UNDP was abandoning the project concept, with years accumulated experience behind it, for the programme approach, which they feared might result in a loss of accountability for the use of UNDP resources.

7. UNDP was urged to demonstrate that the programme approach would not become a convenient label for budget support of clusters of recipient government activities, coordinated by a UNDP-financed programme management unit. It was recommended that before moving to the programme approach, UNDP must ensure that coherent programme strategies are in place, through dialogue with Governments, and technical support and capacity-building assistance. The result should be a policy-oriented framework for the identification, formulation and evaluation of development cooperation activities, whether packaged as programmes or projects.

8. At the same time, it was recommended that whatever the level of assistance provided by UNDP in the development of programme strategies might be, the strategies must be translated into national programmes which are truly "owned" and managed by cooperating Governments, for which considerable capacity-building may be needed, including accountability for the use of UNDP resources.

9. The transition from a country programme based on a thematic grouping of projects to one based on coherent strategies is a necessary first step towards a programme approach to technical cooperation. However, it was recognized that the implementation of a fully-fledged programme approach required that (a) national agencies and institutions must develop the necessary programme management capacity; (b) UNDP field offices must have adequate staff with the necessary skills in the areas of programme analysis, monitoring and evaluation; and (c) optimum use must be made of the country-level expertise of the United Nations system. It was also considered that decentralization of decision-making to field offices is necessary for the programme approach to be effective.